Declining Student Resilience: The Increasing Challenges Facing Faculty in the Classroom

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What is Resilience?

- Resilience is the ability to bounce back or get back up after defeat or failure. Resilience factors include having “healthy relationships, good self-care, and an optimistic outlook. Resilient people use this skill set to respond to problems more effectively and balance life’s demands” (SCoRE, 2016, para. 2).
Students lacking in resilience can display the following behaviors or emotions:

Neediness
Inability to problem solve
Demand for excessive instruction or attention
Students lacking in resilience can display the following behaviors or emotions - continued:

Lisa Simpson Syndrome – refusal to accept anything less than an A.

Immediate escalation of issues to the advisor, Dean, a lawyer, Department of Education

“I’ve got a good lawyer in J. Noble Daggett”
My computer is broken.
I can't afford the textbook
My internet isn't working!
There is too much work in this class!
I don't understand.
I'll contact the Dept. of Ed if you don't accept my late work!
I can't afford the lab kit.
Can you call me?
My computer froze!
My dog ran away!
Why do I have to know this?
What is a browser?
I had a death in the family.
My other teachers didn't require this.
My child was sick.
What is the cause?
Perhaps a Paralyzing Fear of Failure

- Many students cannot comprehend failing because they have never experienced it.
It’s ok to fail; it’s not ok to give up.

- J.K. Rowling was on welfare, her manuscript was rejected 12 times, but now she is one of the most successful authors of our time.
Extra Credit, Resets, and Do-Overs, Oh My!

• How much is too much flexibility?
• What happened to a fair and level playing field for all?
• There are no do-over’s in the real world of employment – only success and failure and the consequences of both.
Who or what is to blame for declining student resilience?
Does it matter?
Overprotective/Helicopter parents

No Child Left Behind

Terrifying world events & constant media bombardment

Increase in legitimate mental health disorders

Lack of mental health services

Litigious society
Mental disorder diagnoses are increasing

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional Dependence
- Bi-polar Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Panic Attacks
Increasing rates of mental disorders combined with decreasing mental health services = Disaster
A little support would be nice.
Supporting Faculty

- What type of support is available to faculty in dealing with low student resiliency?
- Does any institution have a policy that specifically addresses the concern of resiliency?
- On a side note: Many online adjunct professors must now provide a phone number so they can be reached by students.
  - How does this affect students who have low resiliency skills?
The first step towards success is access!
This is what students see when they log in on the first day of class in my course.
Uh Oh!!! Now what?

An error has occurred in the script on this page.

Line: 13
Char: 3
Error: 'this' is undefined
Code: 0
URL: http://www.norton.com/rnr

Do you want to continue running scripts on this page?

Yes  No
Creating solutions

• “Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience.” (American Psychological Association, 2016, Resilience Factors).
Start Strong

• Welcome everyone to class in the Introduction forum.
• Have the schedule of assignments and due dates set for the entire duration of class before the course begins.
• Post this as part of your syllabus so students can see it prior to the first day of class.
Solutions

- Add ‘check-your-progress’ activities to the class.
- Encourage students to become more self-aware, examine their limitations, and embrace any changes necessary for success.
Strategies for building resiliency

• Create a professional, yet friendly and supportive, relationship with your students.
• This means being present in the classroom and easy to reach for communication.
• It does NOT mean you have to be connected 24/7.
Tone: What we WANT to say versus what we SHOULD say!
Good Examples
But perhaps not this!
Instructor Communication is Key

Identify your communication procedures:

- Tell students when you are available and how long they may have to wait to hear back from you – not more than 48 hours.
- Clearly and professionally communicate – follow Emotional Intelligence suggestions (don’t argue with irrational students!)
- Post policies regarding class work, responsibilities, deadlines, grades, etc. at the beginning of the course. Be sure to follow these throughout the course.
Strategies for Building Student Resilience

- Making goals – taking responsibility for their own learning
- Active learning
- Anticipating curve balls
- “Why do I need to know this?”
- Explain criticisms in greater detail
- Resources Guide – Campus counseling, Community health resources, etc.
- Clear policy guidelines from the University on student resilience as well as boundary parameters.
Give a man a fish, he eats for a day.
Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.

(Proverb)
Resources for Students

- Instructor contact information and hours of availability
- Faculty expectations
- Tech support contact information
- Textbook title with a picture and ISBN
- Other required course materials and respective support contact
- Schedule of assignments with due dates
- Directions to find Library resources.
- Online Writing Center links
- Templates for assignments/forums
- Plan B items (internet, computer)
Student Resources/Tackle box

- Study Guides and Strategies: http://www.studygs.net/
- How to Study: http://www.howtostudy.org/
- Managing Your Time (Dartmouth College): http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html
- Stress Management for College Students (University of Georgia): https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/
- Tech Support: (insert your institution’s info here)
- Advisor/Instructor Contact Info
Student Resources (cont.)

• Organization tips:
  • http://zenhabits.net/27-great-tips-to-keep-your-life-organized/
  • http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/how-organize-your-life-10-habits-really-organized-people.html
  • http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/5925.html
• Free Wifi: http://www.wififreespot.com/
• What’s your learning style: 20 questions: http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml
Instructor Resources/Tackle box

- Stress Management: http://www.helpguide.org/
- Warning Signs of Teacher Burn out – Edutopia: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teacher-burnout-warning-signs-maurice-elias
References

Thank you.